PRESS RELEASE

TX VLB's Virtual Assistant "Maverick" Hits Milestone

Texas Land The agency's newly launched system has helped 1,000 Texas Veterans encourages students to write about their communities' unique history

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Today, the Texas Veterans Land Board announced its virtual assistant has helped over 1,000 Texas Veterans with requests for assistance since its inception. Maverick, a virtual assistant powered by IBM's Watson, was launched by the VLB in July 2020 and serves as an online helper capable of quickly directing Veterans to resource pages and answering hundreds of frequently asked questions.

"As an emerging epicenter for technology, Texas is leading the nation in innovation and incorporating technology to better serve communities. I am excited to share these innovative measures and critical modernizations that provide instant resources to Veterans," said Texas Land Commissioner and VLB Chairman George P. Bush. "Maverick will continue to serve Veterans and this milestone will be one of many over the years to come. My team and I will continue to listen to feedback of Veterans and help improve upon this largely successful initiative."

In addition to answering questions regarding loans, Veteran homes, and Texas State Veterans Cemeteries, Maverick will also serve as a directory that can point Veterans in the right direction to find answers to common questions outside the wheelhouse of the VLB, from VA related questions to Texas Parks and Wildlife for inquiries on how to obtain a fishing license. Maverick can now answer questions on 136 different topics. Maverick utilizes cutting edge AI solutions from IBM Watson and is designed to help save Veterans time and frustration. IBM Watson is AI that helps organizations predict and shape outcomes, automate complex processes, and optimize employees' time.

Of the more than 1,100 interactions with Maverick so far, the most frequent topics Veterans have asked about include:

1. Land sales
2. Land loans
3. Home loans
4. VLB program eligibility
5. Veterans homes

Maverick is using IBM Watson Assistant and IBM Watson Discovery on IBM public cloud. It uses natural language processing and machine learning to understand questions from users and deliver answers in real time. IBM Watson Assistant was trained on data and information from the VLB. It is designed to understand when to ask for clarity and, if needed, can direct users to the VLB call center to get additional insights and information during business hours. Users can access the virtual assistant from anywhere on the VLB website. The VLB call center remains fully staffed, operational and equipped to answer questions.